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Physical Contact and Restraint Policy

Reviewed on: 20th January 2025

Next Review due: Spring 2027

Signed by:

A stylized, cursive signature in black ink, likely belonging to the Chair of Committee.

Chair of Committee

Signed by:

A stylized, cursive signature in black ink, likely belonging to N.Y. Ling, the Acting Headteacher.

Acting Headteacher

Introduction

At Ranelagh Primary School we work in an environment where our aim is to provide clear guidance to all staff, and provide information to parents and carers of our use of physical contact.

Physical contact with children in school is an integral part of the job, whether it is helping a child in holding a pencil, administering First Aid or helping a child with intimate care such as toileting. Physical touch can be used to reassure or comfort a child and on occasions guide a child away from an unsafe situation.

The governors, head teacher and staff will take all reasonable steps to ensure that the welfare of pupils is safeguarded and that their safety is preserved and that any physical touch will be done in the “best interests of the child.”

The Governors and the Head Teacher strongly advocate that:

- Staff should always try to deal with any situation through other strategies before using reasonable force.
- Any force used should always be the minimum needed to achieve the desired result.
- The application of reasonable force to restrain or control a pupil is used only as a last resort if the circumstances of the particular incident warrant it.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Address the range of circumstances in which physical contact may be used.
- To give clear guidance on the use of reasonable force.
- To clarify who may use reasonable force in Ranelagh Primary School.
- To explain when and where reasonable force may be used.
- To define what constitutes reasonable force.
- To specify the procedures for reporting and recording incidents

When may physical contact be used?

- Physical contact with a child will occur throughout the day through;
- Congratulating or praising a child
- Interacting through a play activity
- Administering First Aid
- Teaching a physical activity
- Intimate care such as helping a young child in toileting.
- Holding a hand of a child
- Reassuring and comforting a distressed or anxious child.
- Offering support to a child with a physical disability.

Definition of Restraint

Restraint means to hold back physically or to bring a pupil under control.

(Use of force guidance July 2013 DfE)

When may restraint be used?

On occasion it may be necessary to physically stop a child from doing something and this will require restraint through the application of reasonable force.

Reasonable Force All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force, section 93, Education and Inspections Act 2006.

What is reasonable force?

There is no legal definition of “Reasonable Force” so it is not possible to set out comprehensively when it is reasonable to use force, or the degree of force that may be reasonably used. It will always depend on the circumstances of the case. It should only be used as a last resort and be reasonable and proportionate to the context and the circumstances.

There are relevant considerations:

1. The use of force can be regarded as reasonable only if the circumstances of the particular incident warrant it; whether or not it was necessary, therefore physical force cannot be justified to prevent a pupil from committing a trivial misdemeanour or in a situation that clearly could be resolved without force.
2. The degree of force employed must be the least restrictive option that will meet the need- in proportion to the circumstances of the incident and the seriousness of the behaviour or the consequences it is intended to prevent. Any restriction should be imposed for no longer than is necessary.
3. Whether it is reasonable to use force, and the degree of force that could reasonably be employed must also meet the statutory guidance in respect of disability, special educational needs, race, other equalities and human rights. Whatever is done, why and with what consequences must be recorded in an open and transparent manner.

Who may use Reasonable Force/Safe Handling?

- Teachers
- Non-teaching staff (including classroom assistants, clerical staff, lunchtime supervisors, caretaker) – provided they have been authorised by the Head Teacher to have lawful control or have charge of those pupils.

- Volunteers, including parents who have been suitably vetted, should alert the member of staff in charge and defer to his/her judgement as to the appropriate means of handling the situation (in exceptional circumstances the volunteer may need to be authorised by the Head Teacher).

When Reasonable Force may be used

There may be circumstances when a member of staff may have to decide between making an intervention and using reasonable force by placing him/herself in a dangerous situation or standing back and thereby allowing colleagues or pupils to face a potential danger. There will always be an element of personal judgment in these decisions and there is the possibility of someone being injured. However, it is reasonable to expect a member of staff to engage in some risk where there is evidence of danger to others and intervention has a good chance of being effective. Staff should not, however, put themselves in personal danger merely to safeguard property. Reasonable force should be limited to high risk situations and used only as a last resort when all other behaviour management strategies have been exhausted and:

a) Where action is necessary in self-defence or because there is an imminent risk of injury.

b) To prevent a pupil causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil him/herself), e.g.

- An attack on a member of staff or another pupil
 - Pupils fighting
 - A pupil causing, or at risk of causing, injury or damage by accident, by rough play, or by misuse of dangerous substances or objects
 - A pupil running in a corridor or on a stairway, in a way in which he/she might have or cause an accident likely to injure him/herself or others
 - A pupil absconds from class or tries to leave school
- c) Where a pupil is behaving in a way that is compromising to good order and discipline, whether during a teaching session or otherwise, e.g. A pupil is behaving in a way that is seriously disrupting a lesson

Where Reasonable Force may be used:

a) On the school premises

b) Elsewhere (when authorisation has been given to have lawful control or charge of the pupil concerned, e.g. educational visits, sporting events)

What might be regarded as Reasonable Force?

When other behaviour management strategies have failed – it should be the minimum intervention of force that should reasonably be employed depending on the age, sex, physical strength, size, understanding, medical condition and any special needs of the pupil and used in a way that preserves the dignity and respect of all concerned. The use of reasonable force/safe handling should involve a calm and measured approach at all times appropriate to the particular pupil and be in accordance with the school's agreed strategies and the following procedures:

- tell the pupil to stop the inappropriate behaviour;
- ask the pupil to behave appropriately, clearly stating the desired behaviour;
- tell the pupil that physical intervention will take place if inappropriate behaviour continues;
- during the incident repeatedly reassure the pupil and tell him/her that physical contact will stop as soon as he/she is felt to be of no risk.
- if the teacher, classroom assistant or supervisory assistant feels at risk, e.g. from a large or older group of pupils, send for the nearest staff support.

The forms of reasonable force the school will use will depend on the individual circumstances and are:

- a) Separating pupils who are fighting, or who are about to fight
- b) Blocking a pupil's path
- c) Holding
- d) Breakaway techniques (e.g. when a member of staff is grabbed by a pupil)
- g) Shepherding a pupil away by placing hands on the backs of elbows
- h) (In extreme circumstances) using more restrictive holds

Health and Safety

When using reasonable force/physical intervention/restraint/safe handling, the pupil's health and safety must always be considered and monitored. Restraints will only be used when considered necessary and applied for the shortest period of time.

Limits on the Use of Force

The law strictly prohibits the use of force which constitutes the giving of corporal punishment. The use of force as a punishment or to intentionally cause pain, injury or humiliation would contravene our Child Protection Policy. Staff should never act in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury, for example by:

- holding around the neck;
- any hold that might restrict breathing;
- kicking, slapping or punching or using any implement;
- forcing limbs against joints;
- tripping;
- holding or pulling by the hair;
- holding the pupil face down on the ground;
- staff should also avoid touching or holding a pupil in any way that might be considered indecent.

The use of reasonable force is only to be employed in exceptional circumstances or an emergency where a pupil appears to be unable to exercise self-control of emotions and whose behaviour is presenting a threat to himself/herself or others. A member of staff should not intervene in an incident without help if there is a risk that he/she may be injured or may endanger his/her life.

How do we avoid using it?

Our intention will always be that our management strategies and de-escalation techniques will be exhausted before considering physical restraint, unless an immediate threat is posed.

Members of staff facing confrontational situations with pupils are reminded that the following behaviours can either reduce or inflame incidents, and that a brief moment of risk assessment may allow the time to decide on the appropriate action necessary:

- Remain calm – the ability to try and remain calm and appear relaxed is less likely to provoke.
- Be aware of Space – try to be aware of the space around you and avoid stepping into another individual's personal/intimate space. Try to take a step back outside the circle of danger.
- Pacing and Chasing – angry people often pace around in tense situations and staff should try to avoid the temptation to follow as they attempt to help them calm down. This can be counter-productive as it may trigger an animal chase response and drive the other person away. Where possible it is preferable for the staff member to stand still, speaking calmly, clearly and confidently – or even sit down.
- Intonation - when people are anxious or angry they tend to talk faster, higher and more loudly. In a potential crisis situation staff need to deliberately speak slower, lower and more quietly.

Practical Advice for Staff

Help Script:

- Connect by using pupil's name

- Recognise the feelings
- Tell the pupil you're there to help
- You talk and I will listen
- Give direction
- Offer opportunities to help solve any problem

Diffusing body language responses:

- Social distance
- Sideways stance, step back
- Intermittent eye contact
- Relaxed body posture
- Palms open

Calm Stance:

- Think of the values of stepping back from a situation, both physically and emotionally:
- Allows a more considered response
- Time to make a 'dynamic' risk assessment and seek assistance
- Allows other person 'take up' time to make their own choices

Staff should also refer to the school's behaviour policy.

Procedures for Reporting and Recording incidents involving the use of Reasonable Force

Following an incident of restraint a member of the SLT should be informed. After every incident, an incident form, within a bound book, should be completed, (this is held by the safeguarding lead) which details the incident and responses made by the members of staff. The behaviour leader will monitor incidents, follow through any resulting queries with staff; identify any learning opportunities for staff. Parents will be informed on the day of the incident.

Risk Assessments

If we become aware that a pupil is likely to behave in a disruptive way that may require the use of reasonable force, we will plan how to respond if the situation arises.

Such planning will address:

- Management of the pupil (e.g. reactive strategies to de-escalate a conflict)
- Involvement of parents to ensure that they are clear about the specific action the school might need to take
- Briefing of staff to ensure they know exactly what action they should be taking (this may identify a need for training or guidance)
- Identification of additional support that can be summoned if appropriate.

Injury during physical contact

The risk of any physical contact whether in the context of care, learning, comfort, reassurance or restraint is that accidental hurt may take place to either the adult or the child. Incidents whereby an adult or a child is accidentally harmed will be recorded in the accident book. On occasion a restraint (despite the intention to avoid injury) may result in someone being scratched accidentally. When this happens to an adult it is generally due to an incorrectly applied hold or a mistake on our part. When a child is bruised or scratched it may be a regrettable side effect of ensuring that the child remains safe: it should not automatically be assumed due to failure of the professional technique. Any such injury will be recorded in the accident book and the head teacher informed. In the case of injury to a child, the parent will be informed by telephone and the injury recorded on the Pupil Incident form.

Complaints

If an incident occurs in Ranelagh Primary School involving the use of reasonable force/restraint by a teacher, the procedures governing such incidents should be followed. This will include informing the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the child as outlined above. In the event of a subsequent complaint made against a member of staff, either by or on behalf of the child, this will be dealt with in accordance with the Circular 1999/10, Pastoral Care in Schools – Child Protection. Staff, who themselves are subject to physical violence or assault, should be supported, as appropriate, in taking any necessary action against an assailant.